

President Obama to Politico: “I think it’s fair to say, if six months ago, before this spill had happened, I had gone up to Congress and I had said we need to crack down a lot harder on oil companies and we need to spend more money on technology to respond in case of a catastrophic spill, there are folks up there, who will not be named, who would have said this is classic, big-government overregulation and wasteful spending.”

WASHINGTON. D.C. – In an [interview with Politico’s Roger Simon](#), President Barack Obama accused some in Congress of being hypocritical in their assessment of the Administration’s handling of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Ranking Member Darrell Issa (R-CA), who will survey areas in and around New Orleans that have been affected by the spill on Monday characterized the President’s comments as a poor excuse for his Administration’s inaction in addressing the dysfunctional and corrupt nature of the Minerals and Management Service (MMS).

“If President Obama had exercised some long overdue leadership and called on Congress to address the cozy relationship between MMS and the industry they regulate, I would have been the very first to partner with him and give MMS the overhaul it desperately needs,” Issa said. “After ten Inspector General reports, ten GAO reports, a congressional investigation, the real question is, why did it take such a catastrophe for the President to call for action?”

Last October, Issa introduced [H.R. 3736](#), which would strip the Department of the Interior of its management responsibilities for the Minerals Management Service (MMS) and make the troubled collector of oil, mineral, and natural gas revenues an independent agency. The case for the legislation is made in an [Oversight and Government Reform Committee Republican staff report](#), which concludes MMS will benefit from a divorce from the Department of the Interior and the creation of dedicated funding, a new management structure, and leadership focused on MMS’ unique role in collecting royalties owed to the American people.

Despite these efforts, President Obama [told Politico](#) : “Some of the same folks who have been hollering and saying ‘do something’ are the same folks who, just two or three months ago, were suggesting that government needs to stop doing so much. Some of the same people who are saying the president needs to show leadership and solve this problem are some of the same folks who, just a few months ago, were saying this guy is trying to engineer a takeover of our society through the federal government that is going to restrict our freedoms.”

“I don’t know where President Obama is coming from but the problems at MMS have been exhaustively documented and have spanned the better part of the three Administrations,” Issa said. “He has had every opportunity to take charge and demand reform, but instead did what Presidents Bush and Clinton did and ignored the problem, despite giving the ok for expanding offshore oil drilling in March. As soon as he took office, he could have and should have made reforming MMS a top priority. Despite numerous reports highlighting the corruption and dysfunction within MMS, it has unfortunately taken a large-scale and costly crisis to get the attention needed to have a legitimate discussion about the need to overhaul MMS and liberate it from the Department of Interior.”

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